

Local Trust board meeting minutes, decisions and actions

20 May 2020

Via video call

Discussion and decision	Action
<p>Present</p> <p>Trustees</p> <p>David Warner (chair), Sahil Khan, Ben Lee, Jeannette Lichner, Caroline Macfarland, Karen Mellanby, Peter Mills, Nicola Pollock, Kevin Sugrue, Bob Thust, and Rich Wilson</p> <p>Non-trustees</p> <p>Rosie Chapman (Protector), James Goodman, Nicola Hutcheson, Matt Leach, Rachel Rowney, Verity Soons (minutes)</p>	
<p>1. Welcome and Introduction and Apologies</p> <p>The chair welcomed trustees and staff to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Miatta Fahnbulleh. Rich Wilson would need to leave the meeting early.</p> <p>The chair noted that this was an extra meeting for the full board to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be briefed on the ongoing covid-19 situation • better understand the current situation for Big Local Areas. • consider current temporary governance arrangements and priorities for the next 2-3 months. <p>The chair also noted that substantive points from item 4.3 – report from the chair – would be taken at item 9 during the strategic discussion.</p>	
<p>2. Declarations of interest</p> <p>Peter Mills, owner, Brand Ethos (commissioned by UnLtd, delivery partners for Big Local).</p>	

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<p>3. Minutes of last meetings and matters arising</p> <p>3.1. Approve minutes of board on 25 March 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 25 March 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.</p> <p>3.2. Matters arising/action points not covered by the agenda</p> <p>The update on actions from the last meeting was reviewed; it was noted that all were being actioned or formed part of the agenda for the meeting.</p>	
<p>4. Subcommittee minutes</p> <p>4.1. Chairs COVID-19 response committee – 31 March. 7 April, 21 April, 5 May</p> <p>These would follow to all trustees under separate cover when available.</p> <p>4.2. Audit and Risk Committee 28 April 2020</p> <p>The minutes of the April meeting were noted.</p> <p>Jeannette Lichner noted for the board that there were some changes made to the risk register following the committee meeting and that the updated risk register would be shared in due course.</p> <p>4.3 Chairs note</p> <p>This paper would be taken with item 9.</p> <p>Other committee matters</p> <p>Nicola Pollock raised the additional risk created from COVID-19 in relation to the investment strategy.</p> <p>The board noted that in September 2019 a decision had been taken to reduce risk by implementing a change to the investment strategy to move to a near cash portfolio and agreed to focus the investment strategy to controlling risk.</p> <p>With the impact of COVID-19 increasing risk related to investment bonds the board noted that a conversation had been started with CCLA on what appropriate action might be taken to protect Local Trust capital though it was not yet clear what action might be recommended. This would be further discussed at the finance and investment committee meeting on 27 May. It was noted that Local Trust currently held c. £38million in bonds, all due to mature by the first quarter of 2024.</p> <p>The board were asked to note the risks, consider their overall approach to the investment policy in order to continue to reduce risk as much as possible and to delegate implementation to the finance and investment committee to enable action to be taken ahead of the next full board meeting in July if required.</p>	<p>VS to circulate minutes of the Chairs COVID-19 response committee when available.</p> <p>Board to receive updated risk register for information at next Board meeting.</p>

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<p>It was also noted that should a shift to a full cash portfolio be recommended that this would not erase all risk due to risk of hyper-inflation.</p> <p>Board noted the risks and agreed that the investment policy should continue to be implemented to protect capital and focus on reducing risk as much as possible. The board agreed to delegate decision making to the finance and investment committee to implement the approach following further discussions at the finance and investment committee meeting with CCLA.</p> <p>All trustees were welcome to attend the finance and investment committee meeting on 27 May 2020 and to let Verity know if they would like to.</p>	
<p>5. Local Trust Risk Register</p> <p>Matt Leach introduced the report, bringing the following to the attention of the board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support had been received from the audit and risk committee to review the significantly revised risk register following the board meeting in March 2020. • SMT were currently meeting fortnightly to ensure that the risk register remained current and up to date. <p>Key short/medium term risks were noted as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term concerns around LTO insolvencies – nothing significant had happened to date but need to remain aware. • Issues around governance and controls in Big Local areas – this had become more challenging to deal with via zoom but the team remained on top of this. • Concerns of BL areas going into hibernation – this applied to approx. 9 or 10 areas at the moment so remained manageable. There was potential for it to develop into a longer term risk. <p>Key longer-term risks were noted as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal processes and prolonged working from home, noting that it would be challenging for any organisation to maintain itself in the same way as pre-COVID-19. • Impact of recession and sustained economic downturn on the areas we work with. <p>The Chair commented that at the fortnightly committee chairs meeting, conversations had started about organisational capacity and how to lead and support an organisation operating at distance. This would be a key issue to consider over the next two to three months.</p> <p>The board noted the report.</p>	
<p>6. COVID-19 Response Plan Update</p>	

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<p>Rachel Rowney introduced the report to the board which set out progress against Local Trust's COVID-19 Response Plan.</p> <p>The board noted that the original version of the plan had focussed on delivering key parts of the programme and operating the organisation on a day to day basis with a shift to online working and new risks arising.</p> <p>The second iteration of the plan saw a shift in approach as Local Trust were confident that the right systems, processes and procedures were now in place to enable operations to continue. Instead the focus had shifted to look at how to thrive and grow in this new environment in the longer term. A summary of the key changes which had taken place in Local Trust operations were noted as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and changes to board and committee meetings – regularity of meetings increased whilst meeting length decreased • Temporary amendments to sick pay policy – this now included people who had not yet passed probation in order to recognise new recruitment and appropriate support to all staff • Delivery of events – no face to face events would take place until at least 2021 and the programme of events was being reconsidered, including reps in the conversation. • Focus on how to support areas during and after COVID-19 to deliver plans and to review and rebuild their plans. • Management and response to new emerging issues including reps and new IR35 guidance. Local Trust are reviewing this situation and seeking guidance. <p>The Board noted the update and the paper and key discussions/points raised were as follows;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing if there were roles which might be suited to home working long term and why we would send staff back to the office, the board noted that there were some challenging situations for some staff to overcome such as shared living and lack of space. The psychological benefit to staff for a return to the office and the office culture was also very important and not to be overlooked. This situation was being managed carefully but the return to the office would take longer than had originally been anticipated. • Regarding staff wellbeing, the board noted that the recent staff survey had been largely positive and it reflected that people were having good days and more difficult days and moments as expected. The frequency of the staff survey was being considered to ensure that management remained well informed and able to respond to staff needs. • Regarding productivity, the board noted that at the beginning of the pandemic Local Trust had been very clear that welfare of self and family was paramount. This conversation was now shifting to the expectation and need to deliver within this new environment in the longer term. Ways to drive work forward and to encourage staff to take responsibility were 	

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<p>now being considered, including additional training for management and re-focusing on the business plan to provide clarity for the team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The board noted that reps remained motivated and engaged, with many finding themselves in a position to commit more time to supporting areas. Many reps were classified as vulnerable or had caring responsibilities and Local Trust had remained flexible to their needs. The lock down situation had made it more challenging to resolve tensions existing in the relationships with reps and some areas pre-COVID-19. This applied to very few areas. Newly implemented rep drop in sessions had made a positive difference to engagement. <p><i>Rich Wilson left the meeting</i></p>	
<p>7. Strategic Policy Update</p> <p>Matt Leach introduced the paper which provided an update on intentions for informing, influencing and leading on policy ambitions post-COVID-19. This work had been informed by discussions at the trustee strategy group.</p> <p>The board noted the paper and update and discussed/raised/noted the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It would be important to recognise and acknowledge that the primary responsibility of Local Trust was running the Big Local programme. It would be important that in any discussions we had with partners that we maintained our clear focus on the need to provide long term, patient support to communities - funding on its own was insufficient. Will need to be able to demonstrate to government that investment in communities helped deliver on their wider priorities. Concern that government are so focussed on economic revival that the social revival and social infrastructure risked being overlooked. With the government focus on economic recovery it could provide the right opportunity for Local Trust and its partnerships to focus on creating a movement. <p>The executive noted the comments from the board and responded to assure that provision had been set aside to work on the case for investment in social and civic infrastructure. The comments on cross-sectoral partnerships were welcomed and an increased number of local authorities were already signing up to the Community Wealth Fund Alliance. The board were assured that there were no tensions between the policy work and the core work of delivering the Big Local programme. Both were provided for in the business plan.</p>	
<p>8. Big Local Areas – situation Update</p> <p>Rachel Rowney introduced the report which set out findings from tracking various channels to find out how Big Local areas had been responding to COVID-19. The paper and update were noted, and the following key points brought to the attention of the board;</p>	<p>In November will come back</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a fantastic response to support offers to help areas move online and it had been received well in the communities. • There were always a small number of areas experiencing challenge at any given time and Local Trust had mechanisms in place for dealing with that, however, it had become apparent that this was less true for partnerships that stopped or gone into hibernation through choice. • There was also a risk of burnout for areas which were continuing to do well. The shift to a less reactive more strategic space would be required and some areas don't feel as comfortable in this space. • There had been a large focus on working with LTOs and managing risk of insolvency. A number that had originally been a cause for concern had managed ok and now consideration had shifted to what this risk might look like in the medium to long term as additional funding might cease. <p>The board discussed that once the initial crises period was over the most adversely affected by recession would be the poorest communities in the country, including Big Local areas. In time, the team would need to consider how to support communities to re-focus on legacy and encourage the shift from COVID-19 reaction to longer term strategic thinking. The board noted that this was starting to happen in some areas with loneliness, young people and isolation and unemployment being recognised as key areas of focus.</p>	<p>to the board to have a further discussion on how to work with areas in hibernation and board appetite for intervention</p>
<p>9. Strategic discussion</p> <p>The board discussed a number of questions to reflect on the current status of the organisation and its operations during COVID-19, effectiveness of governance arrangements, priorities for the next quarter and also any comments points arising from the chair's report shared at item 4.3 in the agenda.</p> <p>Trustees reflected that;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It would be important for Local Trust to keep evidencing the positives of shifting power to communities and building relationships with government and local authorities. • The Local Trust team handled the challenges of responding to COVID-19 well • The board was achieving a better balance between retaining oversight of the programme management whilst focusing on strategy and the future of the programme and the committee and sub-groups supported this. <p>The protector shared comments which were welcomed and noted by the board and executive team;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Trust delivery model had enabled the team to move forward through the pandemic in a way that other organisations were only now starting to grapple with which put the organisation in a strong position. • Local Trust did not on the face of it appear under-governed 	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, there were a lot of governance discussions happening in organisations at the moment and need to ensure that any new arrangements put in place were well considered and appropriate. <p><i>Bob Thust and Rosie Chapman left the meeting</i></p> <p>Other points subsequently raised included that as part of the governance review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication, behaviours and inclusivity throughout the governance and committee structures might be reviewed The overall governance structure needed to ensure that delivery of the new strategy was supported in the most appropriate way. Individual committee responsibilities might be looked at. Possible value from smaller working groups or sub-groups outside of the committee structure might be considered, provided these did not add unnecessarily to the burden of governance on what was still a relatively small staff team. Length of papers/minutes/reports and summarising information might again be looked at <p>The board agreed to move ahead with an external governance review with a view to moving this forward in July following the next board meeting. Matt Leach and David Warner would develop a brief for the review which would be shared with trustees in due course.</p>	<p>Matt and David to draft governance review brief and share with trustees</p>
<p>10. Any other business</p> <p>There was none.</p>	

<p>Dates for future meetings</p> <p>Board and AGM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friday 10 July 2020 – Zoom meeting (was originally at connects) Thursday 24 September 2020 - TBC [likely all day commitment – includes visit and Board meeting] Wednesday 15 November 2020 - TBC - (including AGM) - [likely all day commitment – includes visit and Board meeting] <p>Board Awayday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thursday 21 and Friday 22 January 2021 [two day commitment – includes visit, dinner, overnight stay and awayday to finish around 4pm] <p>Programme committee (at Local Trust offices) - All meetings are 2-4.30pm unless otherwise stated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wednesday 9 September 2020 Wednesday 4 November 2020
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Finance and investment committee (at Local Trust offices) - All meetings are 2-4.30pm unless CCLA are in attendance in which case the meeting will run until 5pm

- Tuesday 1 September 2020
- Wednesday 11 November 2020

Audit and risk committee (at Local Trust offices) - All meetings are 2.30-5pm unless otherwise stated.

- Wednesday 7 October 2020

Nominations committee (at Local Trust offices)

- Wednesday 20 July 2020
- Thursday 15 October 2020